

Hazardous Materials Mystery Gas Mass 7-8-82 Shakes Swimmers

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A mysterious cloud of toxic gas is believed to have drifted over Harvey West Pool, causing seven young girls to suffer respiratory distress while swimming Thursday afternoon.

Santa Cruz firefighters were summoned to the pool shortly before 2 p.m. when the girls suddenly became nauseated and had difficulty breathing.

Firefighters and Santa Cruz Ambulance crews administered oxygen to the youngsters and transported them to Community and Dominican hospitals. All but one of the girls was treated and released.

Some of the girls told firemen at the scene they smelled "something bad" in the pool which caused their eyes and their throats to burn. Most were coughing and were having trouble breathing deeply.

Lifeguards at the pool immediately ordered the more than 100 swimmers out of the water and fire Capt. Don

Eisele ordered the pool closed until the water and natural gas lines there could be checked.

Four of the girls were taken to Community Hospital. They have been identified as Lauren Goff, 6, Lisa Pollard, 13, and Monica Gianera, 10, all of Santa Cruz, and Mellissa Horlock, 8, of Scotts Valley. Monica Gianera was admitted to the hospital, but a nurse there said she is expected to be released sometime today.

Dr. Richard Drucker, emergency room physician at Dominican Hospital, treated the other three victims, who have been identified by authorities as Lou Bauerle, 11, and Dwan Frye, 15, both of Santa Cruz, and Christy Comber, 8, of Sacramento.

Two of the three, Drucker told The Sentinel, had more severe symptoms because they had ingested small quantities of pool water. But, he said, it appears the toxic agent was inhaled rather than ingested because of the respiratory symptoms and the swiftness with which they struck.

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All three, he said, slowly got better during the first hour in the emergency room and all were discharged to their family physicians.

Tests of the water in the pool and checks for natural gas and chlorine leaks at the facility both proved negative so city and fire officials this morning said the pool would be allowed to reopen today.

Water tests were conducted by the city Water Department, county Environmental Health and an independent testing lab, said Assistant Fire Chief Bill Schuette.

Meanwhile, fire inspector John Lucchessi and senior county sanitarian Lowell Rau began a door-to-door check of in-

dustrial buildings and the sewer system in the area to see if a toxic chemical might have escaped and drifted over the pool. By noon, that inspection had not produced a cause, said Schuette.

Ken Mabie, supervising sanitarian for county Environmental Health, said this morning the gas cloud is the best theory since all tests conducted at the pool site have proven negative.

Still, said Mabie, there are other puzzling elements to the incident. First, there were more than 100 children at the pool and only seven were affected. Secondly, all of the victims were young females and thirdly, the victims were all from different youth groups visiting the pool and all were at various areas of the pool.